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Security Council

Forty-ninth Year

Provisional

3346th Meeting
Wednesday, 9 March 1994, 12 noon
New York

President:	Mr. Mérimée	(*France*)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Cardenas
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Li Zhaoxing
	Czech Republic	Mr. Kovanda
	Djibouti	Mr. Olhaye
	New Zealand	Mr. Keating
	Nigeria	Mr. Ayewah
	Oman	Mr. Al-Khussaiby
	Pakistan	Mr. Marker
	Russian Federation	Mr. Vorontsov
	Rwanda	Mr. Bizimana
	Spain	Mr. Pedauye
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir David Hannay
	United States of America	Mr. Walker

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

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The meeting was called to order at 12.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Security Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Mr. Eduard A. Shevardnadze, Chairman of the Parliament and Head of State of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted to a place at the Security Council table.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: The Security Council will now resume its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. This report is contained in document S/1994/253.

The first speaker is the Chairman of the Parliament and Head of State of the Republic of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Eduard A. Shevardnadze, to whom, in behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome. I invite him to make his statement.

President Shevardnadze (Georgia) *(interpretation from Russian)*: I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council for giving me this opportunity to speak here. Please accept the gratitude of the people of Georgia for the Council's efforts to restore peace in Abkhazia, to restore justice, to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia.

All the Security Council's resolutions and all the steps taken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and by his Special Envoy, Mr. Edouard Brunner, with the facilitation of the Russian Federation and the active participation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and of the informal group known as the "Friends of Georgia", clearly serve the purpose of achieving these noble goals.

In speaking here, I am placing great hopes in the Council's wisdom, in its desire and determination to help my country and its people to achieve clear and vital prospects for the future. Today they do not have such prospects and they cannot have them in the near or far future without a just solution to the question of the peaceful return to their native land of those who have been driven away, without the establishment of reliable and clear guarantees of their security, without a dignified and mutually acceptable solution to the question of the political status of Abkhazia, within the framework of an integral Georgian state.

I have even greater hopes when I look around this Chamber, where in the recent past I had the opportunity of participating in the taking of decisions. The implementation of those decisions, through the efforts of our community, brought peace to regions of dangerous conflict. I understand, however, that since that time the world situation has changed fundamentally and the Security Council now has to act in circumstances and conditions for which there is no analogy in international practice.

I therefore place my hopes in the Security Council's readiness to work out and implement fundamentally new approaches to the settlement of the multitude of conflict situations and explosions that present a threat to international peace and security. In that sense, we regard today's meeting as a historic opportunity - and not only for Georgia. The decision taken by the Council can serve as a basis of a fundamental model for the comprehensive political settlement of other armed conflicts, taking into account the extremely complex situation in the enormous territory of the former Soviet Union. It will without any doubt whatsoever give an impetus to the successful implementation of United Nations peace-keeping functions and peace-keeping operations in all these explosive regions. This opportunity must not be lost.

The Security Council's enormous competence and its thorough knowledge of the essence of the present

issue make it unnecessary for me to engage in a detailed recounting of the history of the conflict in Abkhazia or to speak in detail of its roots and reasons, its status and the nature of its development. The reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, the many expert analyses, and the reports of the United Nations representatives in Georgia provide a sufficiently broad and accurate picture of events. But, in the interest of that truth which unfortunately is often distorted, I should like to say the following.

In our country we have to deal with a plethora of misfortunes on a whole series of fronts. One of the most difficult and most important of those fronts is the war on crime. This is an inheritance of that universal crisis spawned by the policy of a regime - a subject to which I shall return. Powerful armed bands are terrorizing the population, are in fact establishing their power over extensive regions of the Republic. The scale of their action is such that I wish to say, honestly and frankly, that we are forced to accept the challenge and also act with rather major forces.

Recently in a great number of regions of Georgia subdivisions of internal troops and the police, supported by heavy equipment, have carried out major operations against armed bands; they have disarmed them, eliminated their bases and arrested the ringleaders.

This was the situation that existed prior to August 1992 in Abkhazia and the adjacent regions of western Georgia. The railroad line linking Georgia and Armenia with Russia, virtually the only one and therefore vitally important, was almost daily subject to acts of sabotage. Rails, bridges, electrical power stations and communications lines were destroyed. Mass plundering of goods, which belonged not only to Georgia but also to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, led to losses worth billions of roubles.

The primary bases of such sabotage and terrorist groups were located in Abkhazia. After carrying out acts of sabotage in the adjacent regions, these bandit groups then retreated to the territory of Abkhazia, counting on the fact that because of the complex political situation the Government there would not take action against them. There, too, people were held under guard or imprisoned by the bandits, among them members of the Government - for example, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs, his deputies, my assistant for national security and others.

In such circumstances, protection of surface links and neutralization of the bandit groups became a matter involving the defence of the country's sovereignty. What was unusual and illegal in the fact that, having informed the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia of its intentions, the Government of Georgia sent military sub-units there? In my opinion, nothing. After all, the authorities have the right to take any necessary measures that are within the boundaries of their jurisdiction and competence.

However, the units redeployed in Abkhazia were met there with fire, and it was immediately declared that Georgia had committed an act of aggression against Abkhazia and had occupied part of its territory. Is it possible to occupy one's own territory? I shall not begin to engage in polemics on that question.

Discussion of those issues is not part of my task, and raising them only leads us away from our subject. All too often, politicians and the public engage in polemics as to who was the first to come to this land, in order then - on the rickety basis of an arbitrary interpretation and distortion of history - to try to find grounds for the thesis that Abkhazia is not part of Georgia. I shall not begin to respond to the dubious assertion that allegedly there are no historical or legal bases for considering Abkhazia as an integral part of Georgia, or to references to so-called links between Georgia and autonomous Abkhazia that were lost after the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

However, I cannot fail to express my inability to accept an attitude towards history such that those concerned, not satisfied with assigning it a role as the dirty handmaiden of politics, even arm it with the tools of murder. Genuine history, which has not been adapted to the needs of fratricidal wars, has seen that Georgians and Abkhazis have lived on this land since time immemorial in peace and agreement, mutually linked by spiritual and family ties. While there are historians who wish to try to dispute that fact on the battlefield, there is also the testimony of ancient authors and ancient Georgian chronicles, as well as major works of research by eminent scholars of our time whose conclusions are indisputable: Abkhazia is just as much an integral part of the Georgian land as Georgia's other historical lands.

Aside from the matter of our joint history, there is also the matter of our joint responsibility to the present and future of our peoples. Let us focus our attention on that and only on that. This is the task I am undertaking

here, and within that framework I intend to state my vision of how to solve the problem and our suggestions for doing so.

But before doing that, allow me to express a few other general views. First of all, the conflict in Abkhazia is not an inter-ethnic conflict, a conflict between Georgians and the Abkhaz people. This ethno-nationalistic tinge has been deliberately given to it in order to camouflage the political objectives of its instigators. The conflict arose within an autonomous republic, around issues of property, power and its implementation, the adoption of laws and a State system and the choice of orientation. It was then fuelled from outside by weapons, finances, personnel, information and propaganda, and was used by political groups and clans for their own selfish political and other objectives, in order to achieve political and material benefits both within the Republic and beyond its borders.

The parties to the conflict are not monoethnic. The 1 July 1993 report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, speaks of his continuing efforts to launch a peace process,

"involving the Government of Georgia,

and - this is very important -

"the two parties in Abkhazia and the Russian Federation." *(S/26023, para. 19)*.

I should also like to recall that Security Council resolution 876 (1993) of 19 October 1993 reiterated the Council's firm condemnation of the violation by the Abkhaz side of the Cease-fire Agreement of 27 July 1993 and subsequent actions in violation of international humanitarian law, and also condemned the killing of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.

I wish to say a few words about that event. In the hour of martyrdom of that outstanding individual, Mr. Jiuly Shartava, he was accompanied not only by Georgians but also by Abkhazians, Russians and Armenians, nearly all of whom shared the fate of their leader and friend. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated fact. Shootings, torture, retaliation beyond the bounds of the law, insults, beatings and imprisonment were inflicted on State officials, deputies, journalists, writers, scholars, doctors, workers and landowners, without any distinction as to nationality, but on the basis of one factor alone: whose side the person was on.

Violence breeds violence and cruelty to cruelty. No matter how hard it is to speak of this, justice requires us to say that murders, the burning down of houses, looting and plundering are also on the conscience of parties to the conflict on the Georgian side. I shall not call these "excesses", as is done in Gudauta, but in calling things by their names I wish to emphasize that both the Georgians and the Abhazis are our fellow citizens, and we do not divide them into our own and others. Taking advantage of the unprecedented external support of the most extremist reactionary forces, the Gudauta clique unleashed "ethnic cleansing" and genocide, and in the wide-ranging swath it cut it did not distinguish people by their origin. Frequently the Abkhazis killed other Abkhazis because they did not share the assumptions of the regime.

Numerous surveys of the refugees and forcibly displaced persons show a high degree of mutual ethnic tolerance between Georgians and Abkhazis, which once again supports our thesis: that this conflict does not have ethnic or national roots. It has other roots, fed by outrageous nationalism growing into a phenomenon that I can describe only as fascism. This is an unusual fascism, a fascism of the post-communist era. Born in the depths of the communist system, it seeks and finds an outlet through the efforts of certain groups and clans, and for political purposes makes use of the natural national feelings of masses that have been oppressed under ideological pressure.

I must recognize, painful as it is, that through the efforts of the regime that came to power after Georgia gained its independence, fascism also made itself felt in my country as a whole. I have described it clearly as provincial fascism, for only by having diagnosed the illness can one do battle with it, and we have done battle with it. Our people understood what kind of threat to itself, to its foundations, to its way of life and to its traditional ethnic and religious tolerance it was dealing with.

This threat is not limited to the borders of one country. With the example of the conflict in Abkhazia, we have realized how broad are the links and coordinating actions of that "red and brown International", which brings together the former centre and the outlying regions to form a united front struggling against independence and democracy. The object is the

restoration of totalitarian regimes, only now under the flags of ultranationalism and chauvinism. This was the case in Abkhazia as well, where, long before the outbreak of the conflict an effort was made to establish an ethnic dictatorship of the minority; under a discriminatory electoral law 18 per cent of the population received the right to send to the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic more representatives than all the rest of the population. Consequently, the results of the vote on any question were predetermined in favour of the minority and the rights of the majority were infringed upon.

Secondly, neither before nor after the beginning of the conflict did we ever call into question the issue of Abkhaz statehood, and we are not calling that issue into question now. However, we can speak of statehood within the binding and solid framework of the principles of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), taking into account the interests of the multinational population of Abkhazia, including the Georgian sector, which accounts for nearly half of its total population. Driven from the borders of Abkhazia by "ethnic cleansing", violence, coercion and an unprecedented mass trampling underfoot of human rights, the Georgian population has lost neither the right to live in the land of its ancestors nor the right to the guaranteed protection of its legitimate interests.

Thirdly, our will for peace has been reaffirmed by three cease-fire agreements and the adoption of appropriate measures required for their implementation. I recall here the first agreement, which the President of the Russian Federation and I signed less than a month after the outbreak of the armed conflict, on 3 September 1992, when we controlled the greater part of the territory, including Sukhumi and Gagra, the region bordering Russia and the border on the River Psou.

Neither then nor later did we deal in categories of war or victory. We were not banking on a military solution to the problem. To avoid bloodshed, we sat down at the negotiating table, to which the people who had unleashed this war - in fact, rebels - were also invited. Taking advantage of the protection and patronage of powerful forces and the support, military and otherwise, and direct participation of those forces in the conflict, they began to dictate conditions whose legal viability was not even called into question. It is hard to speak about legality and law with those who violate them, but we engaged in dialogue and concluded agreements simply in order to halt the war and the bloodshed.

As is well known, all of these agreements were treacherously violated, and particularly severe consequences resulted from the violation of the Agreement of 27 July 1993. Those citizens who had left Sukhumi and other population centres believed in the possibility of a peaceful settlement and returned home. Moreover, the Georgian side, in accordance with the Agreement, had withdrawn all heavy equipment and personnel from the territory under its control.

The sudden attack by the Abkhaz side on unarmed population centres on 16 September doomed the peaceful population to an existence as prisoners under an evil will and crude violence. Thousands died under the shelling and missiles, and thousands more on the roads to exile. Thousands were deprived of their homes, homeland, property and breadwinners, and received in return the bitter lot of refugees and displaced persons.

I would not begin here to dwell on these well-known events if the traditional policy and behaviour of the leaders of Gudauta had been aimed at constructive action and if it were not for their customary practice of wrecking agreements and undermining negotiations already under way within the framework of the Geneva process, begun under the aegis of the United Nations.

The decision concerning the start of the return of the refugees to the Gali region has not been implemented. Moreover, prior to the third round of negotiations in Geneva on a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, there was a new wave of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide in parts of this region where Georgians still remained. On 3 February - the day of the signing of the Georgian-Russian treaty - there began a large-scale, 10-day punitive action against the peaceful inhabitants of the region. Despite the request that was made, representatives of the United Nations Observer Mission were not allowed to go to the site of these bloody events, but were allowed in only after the conclusion of this so-called operation. The Gali tragedy is an answer to Security Council resolution 896 (1994), which condemns any attempts to change the demographic composition of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia.

Let us now take up the question of political status. I think this question is particularly important. I have already spoken many times and am ready again to repeat to the entire world that there are no problems here for

us, that this matter can be resolved taking into account and using the most progressive universal and European standards. That advantage will also be available to the entire multinational people of Abkhazia - Georgians, Abkhaz, Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks and Jews. But obviously it would be unjust to resolve the question of status before the return of the refugees and displaced persons - Georgians, Abkhaz, Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks and Jews - refugees who account for two thirds of the multinational people of Abkhazia.

I assume that not everyone is aware that before the beginning of the armed conflict, Abkhazia enjoyed all the rights of broad political, social, economic and cultural autonomy, which fully ensured the development of the national identity of the Abkhaz people. There was in operation a broad network of Abkhaz schools; an Abkhaz university was opened; newspapers, magazines and books were published in the Abkhaz language; national radio and television broadcasting were established; on the basis of the constitution of Abkhazia, there functioned the highest legislative organ, the Government and the Supreme Court; and the State language, along with Georgian and Russian, was the Abkhaz language.

Negotiations were conducted on a further expansion of the competence of Abkhazia's organs of power. But this was not enough for the separatists. They wanted to achieve full secession from Georgia and did not balk at major bloodshed in order to do so.

Despite this, we continue to declare with full responsibility that nothing is threatening either the statehood of Abkhazia, the national identity of the Abkhaz people or the interests of the multinational population of Abkhazia as a whole. We are ready to grant even broader rights so long as the territorial integrity of Georgia is preserved.

We are putting forward our proposals here on the broad and solid basis of all seven relevant resolutions of the Security Council, without going beyond the framework of the mandate of the United Nations Group of Experts. Nevertheless, the Gudauta regime is virtually wrecking the negotiations on status.

It appeared that, having agreed to participate in negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations, the Gudauta leaders agreed to respect at least the parameters sketched out by the Security Council for the conduct of this matter. However, the experience of practically every meeting - and an example of this is the third round of the Geneva negotiations - attests to the opposite.

One wonders whether we are dealing with a practice of procrastination, with the desire to create an impasse which once and for all would undermine the possibility of a comprehensive political settlement and, most importantly, exclude the possibility of the return of the refugees.

If that is so, and no other conclusion can be reached, then what should be our response to these attempts to use the United Nations as a cover to hide the final dismemberment of the territory of a State Member of the United Nations?

I would say that the answer is this: only the determination to act in such a way as to deprive the opponents of peace and of a settlement of the opportunity to manipulate a number of very complex issues. To do this, as a minimum, there is a need to untie - to untie, not to chop through - the Gordian knot of a solution; to introduce into the region United Nations peace-keeping forces; and to achieve progress at the negotiations on the political status of Abkhazia. After all, we have on several occasions been convinced that, through the so-called efforts of Gudauta, progress in this direction is becoming unattainable.

It is inadmissable to make 300,000 refugees and displaced persons, as well as the very idea of a political settlement, hostages to the lack of goodwill of one of the parties and a group of people.

A key question for us is their peaceful return to their native lands guaranteed by special measures to ensure their security, rights and interests. Without that, no peace in the region is possible. One is impossible without the other, and overall, all of this is impossible without the deployment in the conflict zone of armed forces of the Organization. As for the political status of Abkhazia, there is a mandate, given on the basis of the Geneva Memorandum of Understanding, within the framework of which one side is acting and the other side does not wish to act.

This is not the only closed circle that needs to be opened. There are two opposing models - two concepts, two approaches - to the use of United Nations armed forces in the conflict zone.

Firstly, in all the proposals of the Abkhaz side, a leitmotif is the notion of the separation of the parties to the conflict along the Inguri river. The troops would separate them without interfering in the events taking place in the territory under the control of each side. We would agree with such a solution if it were not for the numerous and very compelling recent testimonies to the effect that, first of all, this would tend to underline the fact of the separation from Georgia of part of its territory and a change in the demographic composition of the population of Abkhazia; secondly, it would transform the Gudauta regime into the total master of the fates of those refugees and displaced persons who are returning. On the basis of their bitter recent experience, they will not return to a place where nothing and no one can guarantee their security, the preservation of their lives and the protection of their civil, personal and property rights.

The events of Gali reaffirm this. Before the start of the third round in Geneva, punitive acts included the razing of several villages in this region and the killing of hundreds of people, and 15,000 more individuals left the land of their ancestors.

The second approach is as follows. We have nothing to divide and no reason to divide anything except competences. To us, the most important and major condition for a peaceful settlement is the peaceful return of the refugees and forcibly displaced persons. The continuation of "ethnic cleansing" in the Gali region has demonstrated that Gudauta either does not wish, or is not in a position, to provide them with guarantees of security. In connection with the fact that the Gudauta leaders required that they be screened, I should like to remind you of the resolution adopted on 31 January 1994, in accordance with which the Security Council recognized

> "the right of all refugees and displaced persons affected by the conflict to return, without preconditions, to their homes in secure conditions" (resolution 896 (1994), para. 11).

The creation of these secure conditions is problematic in an atmosphere of anarchy, chaos and arbitrariness. It cannot and must not be entrusted to one side, whose capacity to comply with and implement the obligations it has underwritten is, to put it mildly, in doubt. In our view, therefore, the only way towards a peaceful political settlement is the deployment in the conflict zone, throughout the territory between the Inguri and Psou rivers, of international peace-keeping forces to promote a solution to the following objectives:

- a full, phased demilitarization of the conflict zone;
- the deployment of international observers and the establishment of appropriate conditions for unimpeded implementation by them of their obligations;
- the voluntary, dignified return, without preconditions, of displaced persons and refugees to their homes in Abkhazia;
- the return to them of the housing, plots of land and property which were taken from them;
- removal from the regions to which the refugees and displaced persons will return of all armed units aside from United Nations armed forces;
- cessation of the criminal practice of discrimination by nationality and, even more so, of the continuation of "ethnic cleansing" aimed at changing the demographic situation.

Our plan for a comprehensive political settlement in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, provides for the holding, under international supervision, of elections leading to the establishment of new organs of power; the establishment, prior to the elections, of an international directorate with the participation of the parties, a representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Russian Federation, the group of "Friends of Georgia", and other States Members of the United Nations; and the establishment of a provisional joint administration for Abkhazia to carry out executive functions, acting under the leadership of the international directorate.

An international body would be established under United Nations auspices, with the Russian Federation as facilitator and with the participation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); jointly with the international directorate and the Government of the Republic of Georgia, this body would devise and implement a programme for the economic revival of Abkhazia. I inform the Council that I have provided to the Chairman of the group of United Nations experts, Mr. Giorgio Malinverni, a proposal addressed to the Abkhaz side to send representatives to participate in drafting a new constitution for the Republic of Georgia.

Members of the Council are aware that my proposals for the use of peace-keeping forces in Abkhazia are endorsed by the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin. A little less than a month ago the Security Council was informed of our joint message, which said in part that

> "In the course of the Geneva talks held under the auspices of t e United Nations with the assistance of Russia, it became obvious that only the deployment of a neutral peace-keeping force in the zone of conflict would be capable of providing the basic measure of external support to the political process that would promote a gradual but steady stabilization of the situation". *(S/1994/125, annex)*

It is a fact that, while claiming to be in favour of a settlement, its opponents are actually thwarting the achievement of an agreement. It is not hard to foresee that they will do everything in their power to prevent the return of refugees and displaced persons. Any delay in deploying United Nations troops in the zone of conflict will have a detrimental effect on the lot of the 300,000 exiles, whose desperate situation could force them into spontaneous actions.

I should like the Council to take all those views into account as it reaches a decision.

Let me repeat that the conflict we are striving to extinguish cannot be seen as an isolated or local phenomenon. It was ignited at the intersection of the most sensitive arteries of a broad region, arteries through which destructive impulses flow to adjacent countries, destabilizing the situation in southern Russia and transforming the Caucasus, with its other no less serious conflicts, into yet another powder-keg threatening peace. This conflict exists in the context of the vast range of disruptions of international security encompassing the Middle East and other regions. By putting an end to this conflict, the Council would significantly weaken the destructive force of that trend. It would send a warning to those who are attempting to subject universal principles of democracy to instincts related to "blood and earth" and to ultranationalism and warmongering. That in turn would teach a concrete lesson to the proponents of the aggressive separatism that threatens to set the world afire in a chain reaction of fragmentation.

If the Council did not do this, it would be lending those forces fresh strength and building their confidence in their impunity and in their ability to hurl an unanswered challenge at the international community and to ignore its will and its decisions, thus trampling underfoot the fates of countries and peoples.

I should like the Council to consider this problem in the context of a broader situation through the prism of the three interrelated factors of peace, development and democracy, which the Secretary-General has termed the fundamental priorities of mankind today.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: I wish first of all to welcome to the Security Council an outstanding statesman, Chairman of Parliament and Head of State of the Republic of Georgia, Eduard Ambrosevich Shevardnadze.

The Russian delegation listened very carefully to the statement just made by the Head of State of Georgia. We agree with his conclusion regarding the need for the international community to take immediate active measures to provide assistance to deal with the Abkhaz conflict.

The Russian Federation confirms its grave concern at the continued lack of a settlement of the Abkhaz conflict, with its important pending issues relating to a political settlement and to humanitarian problems, primarily the return to their homes of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. This poses a genuine threat of renewed large-scale bloodshed. It is clear that a resumption of armed clashes would lead to thousands of deaths, the destruction of much property and the serious destabilization of the situation in the Republic of Georgia and throughout the Caucasus.

To avert this tragedy, the international community must take forceful measures in strong support of the peace process. We consider it extremely important for the Security Council to respond positively to the frequent request of the leadership of the Republic of Georgia and of the Abkhaz side that a full-scale peace-keeping operation be immediately deployed in the zone of the Abkhaz conflict.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to progress in the negotiations, particularly with respect to reaching agreement on a full-scale settlement on the basis of unconditional respect for the territorial integrity of Georgia and respect for and guarantees of the statehood and multi-nationality status of the people of Abkhazia. As facilitator, we are actively supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, in cooperation with the current Chairman of the Conference

on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), to press forward with the process towards a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict.

In that connection, I wish to convey our special appreciation to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Georgia, Ambassador Edouard Brunner. Through his tireless and energetic efforts and his tremendous diplomatic skill, he has been actively searching for compromise solutions on the basic issues of a political settlement to the conflict. We believe - and the current round of negotiations in New York confirms - that Ambassador Brunner's efforts will show us the way to find a mutually acceptable agreement that can provide a basis for dealing with the conflict.

At the same time, the President and the Government of the Russian Federation are convinced that in order to encourage a successful and ultimately irreversible peace process, prompt deployment of peacemaking forces to the zone of the Abkhaz conflict is essential. Clearly, it will not be possible to achieve a final solution to the political status of Abkhazia as long as more than half of its population is outside its confines, and as long as efforts are made to alter its ethnic composition.

The Russian Federation fully agrees with the position of the Government of Georgia that only deployment of peace-keeping forces to the zone of conflict can truly and effectively ensure maintenance of the cease-fire, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons to Abkhazia, and the Parties' implementation of the agreements already reached. This applies particularly to the separation and disarming of the parties' armed forces, and to the withdrawal of all units that came from other regions to participate in the conflict.

The Russian Federation supports the proposal for immediate deployment of a peace-keeping force to the zone of the Abkhaz conflict. Any loss of time would work against a settlement of the conflict. The international community must not allow any further bloodshed.

Mr. Inderfurth (United States of America): On behalf of my Government and the people of the United States, I am delighted to welcome you, Chairman Shevardnadze, to New York and to the United Nations. Although this is your first visit as the leader of independent Georgia, you are no stranger to this body or to the world stage.

The name of Eduard Shevardnadze will forever be linked with the momentous changes of recent history: the emergence of democracy in Eastern Europe; the bridging of the great divide between East and West; the easing of the race for nuclear arms; and the inauguration of a new spirit of cooperation within this Council.

Let us remember, as well, the circumstances under which Mr. Shevardnadze departed office. He resigned on principle, warning accurately and eloquently that the politics of reaction would re-assert itself in the former Soviet Union. But the forces of change that Mr. Shevardnadze had embraced and ultimately shaped prevailed.

It was only a few years ago that Foreign Minister Shevardnadze helped guide his old country into a new era. Today, Chairman Shevardnadze asks for our help in confronting the challenges faced by his newly independent country in this time of turbulence, transition and change.

For Georgia, like many of its sister republics, the passage from dependent republic to independent State is difficult. Georgia has been plagued by civil war, economic dislocation and ethnic strife. Mr. Shevardnadze's Government has laboured to address these problems, but resources are limited. The people of Georgia are undergoing extreme hardship. As a supporter of democracy, my Government is prepared to help, and to urge that this Council also do what it can to help.

The most urgent challenge is to find a way to resolve the bitter war within Georgia in Abkhazia. That conflict, which has caused too much suffering on both sides, has generated thousands of Georgian refugees, taxing Georgia's meagre resources and further endangering stability. These refugees were, in many cases, deliberately driven from their homes and have had to survive a brutal winter in remote mountain regions. We should do what we can to help them return, quickly and with dignity. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international assistance organizations are working hard to alleviate suffering and to prepare for repatriation. But only a political agreement, and a real commitment from the Abkhaz authorities to protect them, can provide the essential security they need.

My Government affirms in the strongest possible terms its support for the independence, sovereignty and

territorial integrity of Georgia. We applaud the United Nations effort to encourage an agreement between Abkhaz forces and the Government of Georgia. We are hopeful that the parties can reach a settlement that will include a durable cease-fire and the return of refugees. If this occurs, we would be inclined to support a carefully defined United Nations peace-keeping operation in Georgia, if certain conditions are met, and would encourage other governments to join us. And, I might add, the United States recognizes the urgency of this matter.

In that connection, I note that Mr. Shevardnadze's Government has indicated a willingness to negotiate far-reaching autonomy for Abkhazia. It must be prepared to define in detail how this autonomy will be exercised. But the Abkhaz forces must also recognize in word and deed Georgia's territorial integrity. The ingredients of a settlement are present; but it is the parties who must mix them together.

There are important principles at stake in Georgia today - principles that have even greater importance in today's fluid post-cold-war world. What we do here will be watched closely by Georgia's other minorities, and in other troubled regions of the former Soviet Union. Inaction could encourage those with grievances to resort to violence, creating a vacuum of power that would surely not remain unfilled for long, and inviting a return to the divisions of the past.

Georgia also needs our economic and humanitarian assistance. Without it, hardship will ultimately undo all our political and peace-keeping efforts. My Government has pledged 70 million dollars of humanitarian aid so far this year. Other governments are assisting Georgia. We ask all Member States to join in contributing. The Georgian people have shown their resilience and fortitude repeatedly over the centuries. In this troubled time, they - and we - can rely on the experience, wisdom and spirit of compromise that Eduard Shevardnadze has displayed so abundantly during his distinguished career.

Sir David Hannay (United Kingdom): My delegation joins with others in welcoming Mr. Shevardnadze to the Security Council. My Government has watched with admiration the courage with which he has led his people and sought to restore order to Georgia. It is only 20 months since this Council, in its resolution 763 (1992), welcomed the Republic of Georgia to membership of the United Nations. The challenges that country has faced in those 20 months have been severe. We pay tribute to Mr. Shevardnadze, and to the people of Georgia, for the determination and the patriotism with which they have risen to these challenges.

My Government has played its part, along with many others, in offering humanitarian assistance to Georgia in this period of great trial and need. We have also tried to do what we can to help address the underlying political problems from our membership as one of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia. Our support for the Secretary-General reflects our deep concern at the current situation there, and in particular the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and the continued threat of renewed fighting.

My Government shares the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report of 3 March, that the situations that exist in the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union are every bit as worthy of United Nations attention as those in other regions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other United Nations agencies have a key role to play in Georgia. The Security Council has, by its resolutions, established the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), which is charged with maintaining contact with the parties to the conflict in Abkhazia, and with contributing to their implementation of the agreements reached between them. The Secretary-General and his Special Envoy have been tireless in their efforts to carry forward the negotiations between the parties.

My Government understands and appreciates the sense of urgency expressed by Mr. Shevardnadze and the Government of Georgia, and their desire for still more substantive engagement by the international community through an international peace-keeping operation. The Council will meet to consider that matter further before the end of the month, when it considers the Secretary-General's report requested under resolution 901 (1994). It is, however, crucial that before the Council approves a peace-keeping operation there should be a substantive political framework in place and clear progress made towards a political settlement. There must also be clarity as to the mandate that might be given to the peace-keeping forces in question, which must avoid simply consolidating the status quo.

Negotiations have been in train in New York this week aimed at just such a political settlement. My delegation has, I would frankly admit, been disappointed

that more progress has not yet been made in these negotiations. We note, however, the emergence of some points of agreement, for example in respect of strengthening and making more formal the cease-fire arrangements. But on other key issues there remains a disturbing lack of precision. My delegation hopes that these negotiations will be carried forward urgently, with a view *inter alia* to clarifying key issues that need to be defined before any peace-keeping operation could be undertaken and to securing a satisfactory agreement which will permit the rapid and unconditional return of the refugees to their homes.

In conclusion, I should like to stress two points. The first is that the international community will not, in my view, have very much patience if a party to the current negotiations places obstacles in their path in order to gain time and consolidate its position. The second is that any solution to this problem must respect the territorial integrity of Georgia as well as ensuring the interests of all the multi-ethnic communities of Abkhazia. An agreement satisfactory to both parties which respects these principles is the only way to achieve long-term stability in the region.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic) *(interpretation from Russian)*: The Czech delegation is delighted to have had the opportunity of listening to President Shevardnadze's statement, for two reasons, which are rather different from each other.

First, we are particularly concerned with what is happening in Georgia. There are long ties of friendship that link our two countries. Indeed, there are certain parallels between our two countries. From the point of view of geography, for example, we note that Tbilisi and Prague are about equidistant from Moscow. There are important historical parallels as well. Some 70 years ago, forces of international communism destroyed the young Georgian state that had just freed itself from Czarist rule. And about half a century ago those same forces of international communism destroyed democracy in former Czechoslovakia, which had just been liberated from nazism.

Today, both countries are benefiting from the new post-cold-war atmosphere of freedom and democracy. One cannot of course forget the personal role President Shevardnadze himself played in bringing this about, and we pay him all due respect for this.

It was therefore not an accident that on his way to New York President Shevardnadze stopped over in Prague, where he met with Czech President Václav Havel. Nor is it an accident that my delegation has been following developments in Georgia with particular interest and is very eager to assist in any way it can. As for specific remarks on the situation in Georgia and on ways the Security Council might find to alleviate it, the Czech delegation reserves the right to comment at a later stage.

(spoke in English)

But there is a second reason why we are delighted to have had the opportunity of listening to President Shevardnadze's exposé, and this has to do with the style of work of the Security Council.

Member States of the United Nations sometimes comment that the Security Council takes decisions without interested parties having a chance to state their case to the Council. As a consequence, the Council is not felt to be as transparent and communicative as it could be. This is a matter of great concern to us. Yet, through its President, Georgia has been able to contribute substantively to deliberations of the Council that are only yet to take place. This indicates that when necessary ways can be found to provide for members' input in good time - and you, Mr. President, helped find such a way on this occasion. My delegation hopes that, in this respect, today's meeting is a harbinger of things to come, and that on future occasions too the Council will find imaginative and innovative avenues for listening to members' concerns.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): The Security Council is honoured today by the presence of the Head of State of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze. On behalf of the Brazilian Government, I wish to convey the warmest welcome to him.

This meeting has been convened as we enter a highly important phase of the negotiations towards a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict. The international community stands ready to do its share in contributing to the achievement of this goal. In this respect, my delegation pays a tribute to the tireless diplomatic efforts exerted by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Edouard Brunner, who has played an important role in the progress achieved so far. We are also grateful to the Russian Federation for the role it is playing in its capacity of facilitator of the peace process.

It is the view of my delegation that the principle of the territorial integrity of Georgia should remain the guideline of the negotiations. My delegation firmly believes that, in advancing the peace process, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia should be fully respected, as stated in the Council's previous resolutions on this matter.

We note that early deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia is supported by both sides, though with some differences as to its modalities. We support the deployment of such an operation as a crucial element of a comprehensive settlement of the political conflict.

We are deeply concerned by the reports of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees in Georgia as a result of the fighting. These displaced persons and refugees have a right to return to their permanent homes in conditions of safety. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation on the ground adds a new element of tragic urgency that deserves the prompt attention of the international community and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Brazilian delegation will continue to follow closely the events in Abkhazia, in the expectation that an early overall settlement of the conflict can be achieved through political negotiations in good faith by all sides concerned.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I should like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of the Republic of Georgia, to today's formal meeting of the Security Council and thank him for the introductory report on the situation in Georgia. His statement will help members of the Council to understand better the current situation in Georgia.

Since the conflict erupted in Abkhazia, in the Republic of Georgia, the humanitarian situation in Georgia has deteriorated continuously, with a sharp increase of refugees and displaced people, causing huge losses of life and property. The Secretary-General has pointed out in his report dated 3 March 1994 that without early political progress fighting could be resumed before long and might spread to other parts of the Caucasus region. The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned over this.

The Chinese delegation has always advocated settling disputes through peaceful negotiations. In our view, in the peace process for the comprehensive settlement of the question of Georgia, the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia should be respected by the international community. At the same time, the interests of various ethnic groups of Abkhazia should be guaranteed.

With the mediation of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, the parties to the conflict have already held three rounds of talks and achieved certain progress. However, we have also noted that many questions in the peace process still await solutions. We therefore hope that the parties concerned will seize this opportunity to seek appropriate solutions at the ongoing substantive talks. We urge the parties to effect a cease-fire forthwith, repatriate refugees and displaced people as soon as possible and create conditions in which the United Nations can continue to play its role in Georgia of assisting the two conflicting parties to further promote the peace process for the comprehensive political settlement of the question of Georgia.

Mr. Pedauye (Spain) (*translation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to join earlier speakers in expressing pleasure at President Shevardnadze's presence in the Council today. On behalf of the Spanish Government, I would like to convey a message of solidarity and encouragement to him. We are convinced that, thanks to his courage and personality, his leadership capabilities and his recognized qualities as a statesman, the Republic of Georgia will soon be able to achieve the desired peace and stability.

In previous resolutions, the Security Council has clearly and explicitly pointed out that the situation in Georgia constitutes a threat to peace and stability in the region. It has also clearly reaffirmed that the sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Georgia must be respected and cannot be the object of discussion. The delegation of Spain wishes to emphasize the importance that should be attached to the principle of respect for the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as explicitly mentioned in resolution 896 (1994), of 31 January, which states that progress by the parties in negotiations must take respect for that principle into account, and that the future political status of Abkhazia must take it very much into account.

From this point of view, we consider it disturbing that the Abkhaz leaders continue to proclaim that their

objective is independence and that they do so publicly, using the media - specifically the television and radio stations - in Sukhumi. We are also concerned about the deterioration of the situation in Georgia and the increased fighting in the Gali region precisely at the time in early February when the meeting of the group of experts was taking place in Moscow.

We believe that efforts should be redoubled to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict, respecting the principles established by the Council. Unless political progress is achieved soon, the fighting could intensify. We run the serious risk - as President Shevardnadze said in his statement, and as the Secretary-General has also said - of the conflict's extending to other parts of the Caucasus, a region of extraordinary strategic importance.

In these circumstances, the Security Council should consider the possibility of establishing a peace-keeping force in Georgia. It is regrettable that the conditions for such an operation do not currently exist, as the Secretary-General points out in his report of 3 March (S/1994/253). We trust that this situation will soon change, in which case Spain, despite the Organization's meagre means and the difficulties posed to the Council by new peace-keeping and security commitments, is prepared to consider the possibility of approving a new peace-keeping operation for Georgia with an appropriate mandate. We hope the Secretary-General will be able to report to us favourably on this as soon as possible, so that the return of refugees in conditions of safety can be facilitated, observance of the cease-fire can be monitored and the Republic of Georgia can begin to move towards a return to normality.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that we must resolve the conflict on the basis of compromise. President Shevardnadze's Government has already indicated its willingness to negotiate on autonomous status for Abkhazia. It is now up to the Abkhaz side to make efforts for the sake of this compromise, in the awareness that the international community, represented in this Council, follows developments in this situation very closely.

Mr. Cardenas (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation and the people of the Argentine Republic, I would like to express my appreciation for President Shevardnadze's presence here and for the statement he has just made on the situation in Georgia. We have every respect for his views, which are particularly useful to us in analysing the crisis in his country. We would urge him, and through him all of his people, to continue their efforts to achieve a lasting and peaceful solution, respecting the territorial integrity of Georgia, within a framework of formulas that would integrate its people, including minorities, on a basis of respect and tolerance.

In particular, we appreciate his reference to the need, whatever the circumstances, to respect international humanitarian law, so often violated in other areas recently. We also appreciate his clear condemnation of the practice of stirring up passions, the source of conflicts which are destabilizing the human race and thus are of concern to all of us. Though this is sometimes hard to understand, the only antidote to such passions is a difficult blend of calm firmness and renewed tenacity, but also a minimum consensus. We believe that this mix will be continually present in the response to the crisis the Council is now confronting.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

Mr. President, my Government welcomes your presence in New York today. It is pleased to see you presiding over the destiny of your country, and particularly pleased to see in your position an eminent person such as you, well known for a commitment to working in the service of peace.

I wish first of all to assure you of my Government's full support for the ongoing negotiations aimed at putting an end to the tragic conflict in your country and thus to the terrible suffering of your people. As you know, France has spared no effort to contribute to the success of the peace process in Geneva. Rest assured that it will continue to make its contribution to the quest for a settlement of the conflict.

On this occasion, my Government wishes to send a very clear message on three matters of principle: the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia; the return of displaced persons and refugees to Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia; and the modalities for a peace-keeping operation.

There can be no settlement without agreement on a formula that is compatible with respect for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. Constitutional arrangements aimed at facilitating a political settlement could certainly emerge from the negotiating process. It

will be up to you to decide. However, in my Government's view, it is out of the question to compromise on the principle of the territorial integrity of your country within the framework of the final settlement that is reached.

The matter of the return of displaced persons and refugees is also of great importance. Every effort should be made to ensure that their return takes place in the best conditions. It is not only a painful humanitarian problem that must be resolved to end the suffering of the populations affected and to restore their rights, but also a substantive political issue. Forcible alteration of the ethnic composition of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, is unacceptable. The return of displaced persons and refugees is another prerequisite for a political settlement.

I should also like to highlight the hopes placed in the negotiating process under way. In this regard we very much appreciate the efforts and actions of Ambassador Brunner, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. My Government hopes to see the negotiations carried to a conclusion. It hopes soon to see substantial progress towards a political settlement, enabling the Security Council to take a decision on the deployment of a peace-keeping force in your country. As is well known, my Government looks favourably on the principle of such an operation. I wish to recall in this connection that such an operation will have to be in conformity with the customary rules governing United Nations peace-keeping involvement, in particular, the definition of its mandate, the force's composition and command and its financing.

Once again, Mr. President, I welcome the opportunity given the Security Council to hear your address at this crucial moment for the future of your country.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers for this meeting. The next meeting of the Council to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be scheduled in consultation with Council members.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.